

This listing of the claims replaces all prior listings of the claims.

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended) A process to obtain a fleshed pelt using saline water, said process comprising the steps of:

i) treating ~~raw hides/skins~~ a raw hide or skin with not less than 300% w/v of saline water ~~having containing~~ 11000 to 30000 ppm of chlorides, in the presence of not less than 0.04%w/v of salt of an alkali metal or alkaline earth metal, either individually or in any combination thereof, for a period of not less than 12 hours to obtain soaked ~~hides/skins~~ hide or skin,

ii) treating the soaked ~~hides/skins~~ hide or skin with not less than 2% w/w of alkali metal in combination with not more than 200% w/v of saline water for a period of not less than 6 hours, and

iii) fleshing the treated ~~hides/skins~~ hide or skin of step (ii) to obtain the fleshed pelt.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the saline water has a sodium chloride concentration of more than 25000 ppm.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the salt in step (i) is a salt of an alkali metal.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the salt of the alkali metal alkali is selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate and combinations thereof.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process, as claimed in claim 9, wherein the salt of the alkaline earth ~~metals~~ metal is selected from the group consisting of calcium hydroxide, magnesium hydroxide and combinations thereof.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ~~skin/hides~~ hide or skin ~~are~~ is obtained from ~~animals~~ an animal.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 6, wherein the ~~animals~~ animal is selected ~~are~~ from the group consisting of a cow, goat, sheep and buffalo.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, comprising treating the fleshed pelt prepare a finished leather.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the salt in step (i) is a salt of an alkaline earth metal.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended) In a process for obtaining a fleshed pelt comprising the steps of (i) soaking a raw ~~hide/skin~~ hide or skin in water for a time effective to promote sufficient rehydration of the ~~hide/skin~~ hide or skin to facilitate the subsequent removal of non-collagenous material from the rehydrated ~~hide/skin~~ hide or skin, (ii) treating the rehydrated ~~hide/skin~~ hide or skin with sufficient alkali to swell protein in the rehydrated ~~hide/skin~~ hide or skin ~~whereby~~ to facilitate removal of the non-collagenous material, and (iii) fleshing the ~~hide/skin~~ hide or skin treated in step (ii) to obtain the fleshed pelt, the improvement comprising soaking ~~wherein~~ the raw ~~hide/skin~~ hide or skin ~~is soaked in~~ of step (i) in saline water having a salinity of more than 25000 ppm in the presence of a salt of an alkali metal or alkaline earth metal before the ~~hide/skin~~ hide or skin is treated with the alkali in step (ii), wherein the ~~hide/skin~~ hide or skin is soaked in step (i) in not less than 300% w/v of the saline water in the presence of not less than 0.04 w/v of the salt of the alkali metal or alkaline earth metal.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 10, wherein the rehydrated ~~hide/skin~~ hide or skin is treated in step (ii) with not less than 2% w/w of the alkali in combination with not more than 200%w/v of the saline water for a period of not less than 6 hours.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 11, wherein the salt is a salt of an alkali metal selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate and combinations thereof.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 11, wherein the salt is a salt of an alkaline earth metal selected from the group consisting of calcium hydroxide, magnesium hydroxide and combinations thereof.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 11, further comprising treating the fleshed pelt with operations including tanning to prepare a finished leather.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 11, wherein the ~~skin/hide~~ hide or skin is from a cow, goat, sheep or buffalo.